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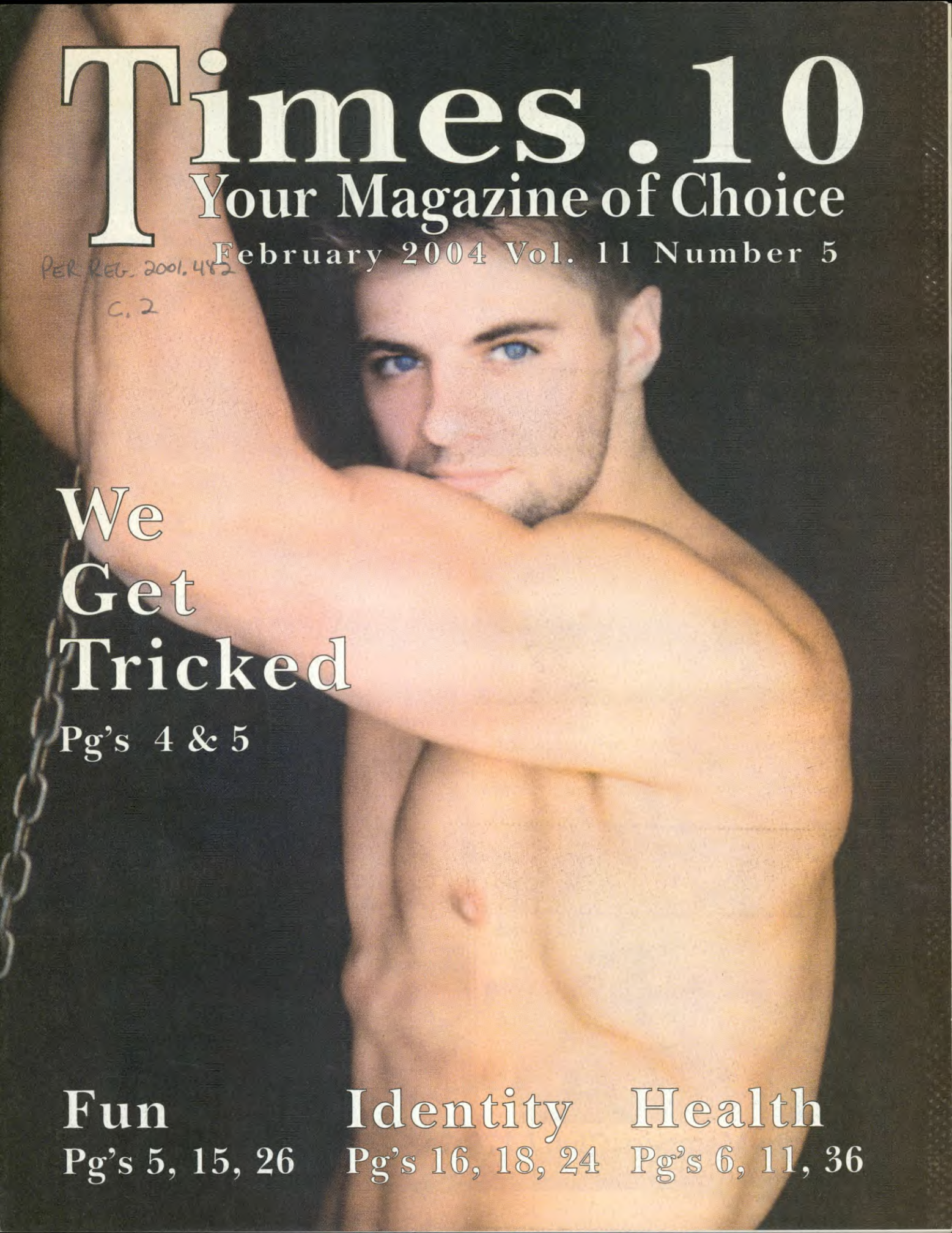

We Get Tricked

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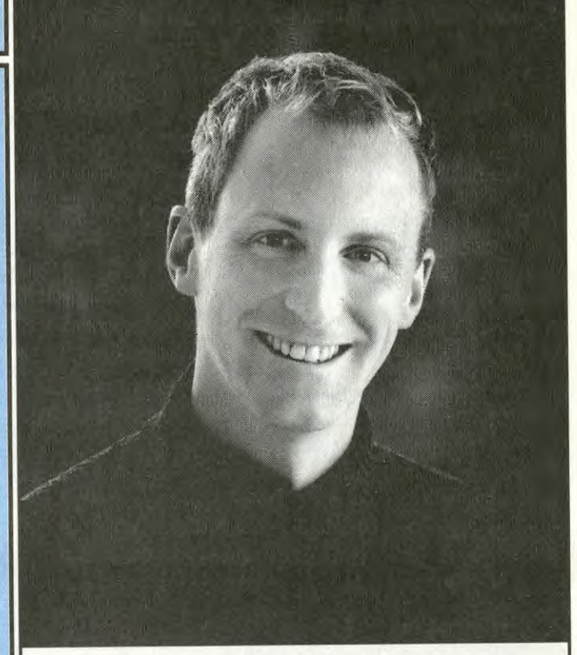

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We Get Tricked

By Liz Massiah, MSW, RSW
Clinical Social Worker

Life sure is a funny thing. I had decided to take a break from this column for a while, told Dennis...and then one of our community leaders died. And the phone started to ring with folks asking whether or not to talk about the elephant in the corner, the fact that he had chosen suicide. Tell the kids, don't tell the kids, what to say at the service, and of course, the inevitable " why". Accompanied by the guilt of " what if I had...".

So here I am again, with a few words that I hope will help all of us deal with suicide. We need to talk about the depression, about the meaning of our lives, and about risk taking in love and life.

It is not suicide that kills, it is depression, It is the belief that the awful moment is all there is and all there is going to be. That is done by depression. Depression tricks us into thinking in a nasty way. Into thinking that this moment or the past week is all there is. That tomorrow will not be different.

We keep suicide in a special category of shame. Many religions add to that by refusing burial in the church plot, by thinking that person is going to hell for sure. So they make it even tougher for the survivors, reminding us to be full of shame and to not speak of the real cause of death.

As lesbians and gay men, we must be ever vigilant of efforts to silence, to want us to keep secrets. We know better than most the impact of secrets, of shame and of stigma on our emotional health. Why is the suicide risk for gay/lesbian kids so high – in part because of the shame, the don't talk about it mentality that surrounds both being lesbian or gay and being depressed. We must talk about it. It's as simple as that, its form of coming out. Scary and freeing.

Few of us go through life without thoughts of suicide at one time or another. Sometimes we make a plan, sometimes we just keep it as a fantasy. Sometimes the fantasy is useful, for as long as we can use that to keep us going, we keep going. But plans and attempts are different things, and having tried once, means we are much more likely to try again and to succeed. So we need to be able to talk about this shameful wish to not live any longer.

As a society we seem to have become risk aversive on the one hand, yet into extremes on the other. And that just does not work. We seem to have decided that extreme sports, with their addictive adrenalin rushes are fine, but we are germ phobic. We are horrified if we get a contagious disease after we have exposed ourselves to it, (whether HIV or SARS or a common cold). We do silly things like feed cattle back to themselves, when they are not meat eaters. And then wonder why something goes sideways. I could go on and on but I will re focus on the emotional world that I work with and and we all live in every day.

Loving is the biggest risk we can take. Last year, when my Dad died, the Unitarian pastor talked about there being no love without loss and no loss without love. That helped a lot at the time, and still does. If I someone and am not impacted, then, there was no love there. As soon as it hurts, I know there was love. We seem to expect to not hurt like hell at times in our lives, to feel huge hurt and loss. Yet that is part of the risk of love. Whether it is the love of a good friend, or of a child or spouse, when we love, we risk loss and hurt. We have become so risk aversive, we seem to think that we can experience life and love without any losses. It just does not happen that way in real life.

Depression enters into the picture and takes away any perspective of hope we might have. Depression tells us loudly that things will always be this way. We get tricked into weird beliefs, which I think are re enforced by these notions that we should never have to feel emotional pain.

Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist who survived Auschwitz has written about his experiences – many of you may have read " Man's Search for Meaning", his classic. If not, get it and read it. He talks about how those who survived the camps were able to make a final different choice about how they reacted. They could see beauty in a flower in a ditch, in the light on the hill of dirt they were digging. They would have a sense of a future; he spoke of the conversations about the concerts and dinner parties he planned for the future, after the camps.

Frankl thinks that we can make the choice for the future, that making that choice for the future is what makes us human. But for some, depression comes and takes away that ability. And so we suicide, by our own hand, directly, or indirectly through " accidents", drugs, alcohol or unsafe activities.

When despair tempts us, when we are determined to die, for some, there is no stopping them. The community member who died last week had made careful preparations, careful planning. He made his choice, we don't really know why, but he chose it. Depression tricked him, but he was convinced he was doing what he needed to do. We must be respectful of his choice, if we care, if we feel loss, for that means there was love.

As lesbians and gay men, we find it too easy to slip into silence, to avoid the nasty topics that carry a social taboo. There are many who would have us be silent, to pretend. We know that it is the silence that kills the soul, the silence that withers the hope. So speak openly about the suicide, doing it with respect and with love for ourselves and for those who have removed themselves from our lives.

The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author alone. They are not meant to replace consultation with a qualified professional regarding your particular situation.

Dealing With Abuse

By Steve Townsend
Assistant Editor

This month I am going to tell you about something that is very personal to me, in the hope that it will help someone out there that is going through the same thing or something similar in their own life. It is not the easiest things for me to get out and have everyone know about, but it is where I come from and one of the things that helped mould me into the person that I am today.

When I was about 6 years old my mother fell in love with a man named Larry, he was a sweet man, he treated my mom very well and always did things with my brother and I.
He would take us fishing and hunting. He was a heavy equipment operator so he would always take me to the job site and let me ride with him on the loaders and Cats and all of the other equipment that he operated. These were the moments that I will always cherish that I had with him.

Everything changed for the worse after Larry and my Mom took their vows and got married. Larry started to drink everyday, all day. He slowly took on a very different personality he was no longer the man that we knew. He was filled with anger and hate that he directed at everything and everyone, but mostly towards my brother and I.

I remember the absolute fear that I felt every time

that he would take out another bottle of Rye his preferred drink of choice. It would be good for a bit until something set him off it didn't have to be anything really. I can't remember what I said or did, but I remember one of the times when he was laying on the sofa and he called me over. "Steven come here I have a secret to tell you" he said. I was trembling with fear as I walked over to the sofa I knew that he didn't have a secret to tell me, but I would have just made things worse if I had not done what he said. So I inched my self towards him. Then he said, "Come closer I will whisper it in your ear." So as I bent down to receive the message he up and backhanded me in the side of the face, with all of his might. My head jolted to the side, I was in total and utter shock. I ran up stairs to wear my mom was with my nose bleeding onto my shirt. She comforted me and helped stop the bleeding. I was so scared not that this was the first time that something like this had happened, but when you are so young I don't think it is ever not a surprise.

When I was getting ready to leave the next day, my Mom asked me to say if anyone at school asks about your face just tell them that you feel into the door knob. I told her that I would. As I was playing outside at recess my teacher Mrs. Adams came up too me and asked me what happened to my face. I couldn't even answer her. My eyes just welled up with tears. So she took me to the office and took some pictures. I don't think they ever called my house about it or anything, which was good because it would have either just made things worse, or even worse I could have been taken from my mom and I did not want that.

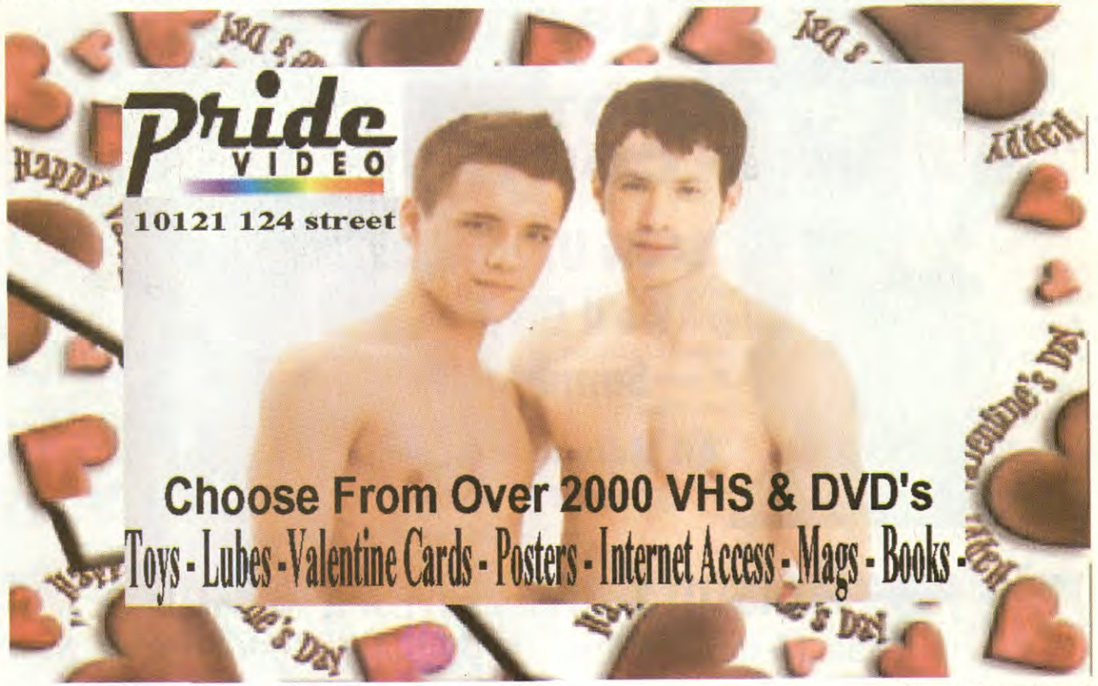
I think the mental abuse was just as bad as the physical though. Growing up I was probably the worst speller in the world I could read well but when it came to spelling lets just say I umm sucked! Well Larry didn't like this he thought that it would make me inferior to the other kids at school. Although I really think that they could have cared less, but that is just me, what would I know I was only a kid, as we all know kids know nothing? (I am being sarcastic) So he devised a punishment for me. For every word that I spelled incorrectly on my spelling test I would be grounded one week to my bedroom, and if I got every word on a spelling test right he would knock off a day. How nice of him lets just say I spent many days in my room. My mom would let me go outside but when he got I had to go back in my room or I would suffer the consequences.

I often wonder to myself what can make a man do the things that he did to a child. Is it just the sense of power that he may of felt when he did those things? Was it just a bad upbringing? Or was it the alcohol? I think it was probably a combination of all these things that made him act so wicked. Will I ever know all the answers, I am not sure, but I would like too.

For the longest time I felt so much anger towards my mom for allowing these things to happen to my brother and I, but as I grow I have realized that she didn't allow it, she was just as much a victim of his abuse. Although she wasn't physically abused by him she was mentally and it is was probably the hardest thing that she went through when she finally got the courage to leave him. And I love her for always being strong for my brother and I.

Abuse comes in all forms you just have to know what to look for. I hope that if you are finding yourself in a situation like this, or ever do, that you know you are never alone, there are other people out their going through similar things. Everything will get better; you just have to look inside your self for the courage and the strength to get through it.
It only helps you grow and become a stronger individual.

Be Strong!



So The Wheel Turns

We have heard all the cliché lines over the years when we have one group calling another a Nazi or someone calling someone Hitler like. Since I am of the baby boomer generation I had a number of family members who fought in World War II. As children we listened to all the war stories until we did not want to listen any longer. Through school though we were taught about the war and why it happened and how the United Nations was formed in order to at least hold out some hope that such a war would never happen again.

I continued to read a lot of books and listen to many of the people who fought in that war. Some movies that portrayed at least a close to look at different battles and philosophies are still of interest to me. The propaganda side of what the Nazi Regime did was one of the most fascinating parts of the war. Since 1945 it appears that we did a lot to stop some of the bloodshed but in many ways failed many nations.

We began to hear words such as "Ethnic Cleansing", a very politically correct way of saying that it was okay to mass murder certain groups of people. I suppose that if Hitler's Propaganda

Minister would have been more astute he might have used the same kind of terminology while the mass murders of the Jews, Gypsies and Homosexuals. Not to mention the determination of the Nazi's to keep a pure white race cleansed of any mixed blood.

While were listening to all those war stories as children we were also told about the great Liberal leader Prime Minister M. King. In other words we were filled with the propaganda that the only good person was a Liberal. So we fought for the Liberals, gave to the Liberals and partied with the Liberals.

You might be asking by now what any of this has to do with anything going on in our society today. Here is the catch, in that for the first time in my life I am ashamed to say that I have dedicated all those years to the Liberals. I am not saying that I am overly pleased with what is going on with our Provincial Conservatives and there lack of accountability. Nor am I saying that am all that pleased with what we have as an opposition at the Federal level is much of an alternative.

I am saying that the lessons we were taught by selective cleansing are very, very wrong in our country and in many others. One of my great loves in life is the ability to live in a country that allows us to speak our mind and the freedom to write the truth as we see it, whether it might be off course or not. We can to be corrected and that is one of the great values of the media.

When I saw the story about the RCMP raid on the home of the Ottawa Citizen reporter Juliet O'Neill my mind flashed to the Nazi raids on journalists. The complete shut down of the media unless it was State sanctioned and cleared. The RCMP, acting as though they were a biker gang stormed their way into her home and cleared out her confidential documents leaving behind a shattered home. I was surprised that in acting the way they did they did not smash every window in the house and tear up the floorboards. Somewhere a Judge had signed a warrant to do this or maybe they just have one of those blank ones like those used in Edmonton by the police. If however, a Judge, a person that is not elected or simply put, a bureaucrat, gave the RCMP an open warrant then our country has just moved back to Germany during the 1930's under the Nazi Party.

Our current Prime Minister, Paul Martin should have the heads of the Judge and all of the RCMP involved in this "kristall nacht". I am not making the actual horrific event that happened under the Nazi Party any less by making this comment. I am however saying that the Liberal Party of Canada as I used to knew it has vanished and is gone forever. It is my hope that all members of the media in Canada continue to make this story front-page news. Until Prime Minister Paul Martin and the RCMP apologize to Juliet I will not support him or any member of his party, because whatever the party has become, it is not Liberal. This is the propaganda Ministry at work and the American way of putting fear into the hearts and minds of the people. As long as any un-elected person is allowed to enter and trash the home of an individual we are being lead with a gang mentality.

Is this what Paul Martin is going to do for our country? What protection does any individual have against the RCMP or any police force? Perhaps we should have ten or fifteen helicopters flying over our city and every other city in Canada. That would work as good as the gun registry!

Paul Martin, you should be ashamed for letting this happen! You are an elected official in this country so please let us know who is running it? I listened to you over the years and your Father would be rolling over in his grave in knowing what you are letting happen to his beloved country. He was a real Liberal and you obviously learned nothing from him, or this type of event would have never happened.

And what choice do we have when we go to the election polls this year? The man who believes that man walked with dinosaurs is still there hiding behind Steven Harper. I suppose we have Eddy back and he can tell us about the "ordinary Canadians" again. Talk about Mr. Ho Hum.

It is no wonder that the police along with the judges have taken control, while our Prime Minister and his party "fiddle while the people burn".

By Dennis Cambly
Managing Editor

Someone You Know and Love Is Gay

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New Year's Resolution

This is my first column for 2004, and with it, I am calling on the provincial government to make a New Year's

Resolution. Resolve to start acting on those public reports that you've commissioned and the taxpayers have paid for over the last decade. Or, maybe you should just admit that they were expensive public relations ploys aimed at lulling the general public into believing that you were actually doing something.

There are four outstanding reports that I think the Tory Government should resolve to act upon. The first is the Mazankowski Report on Health. This report was released in January 2002, at the same time the Klein government spent millions pushing a slick advertising campaign called Health First. The Mazankowski Report outlined a comprehensive package of health care reforms that would sustain and strengthen Alberta's health care system for the future. These recommendations sit on the shelf gathering dust.

The second is the Learning Commission Report. The Klein government claims that it has accepted 85 of the 95 recommendations put forward by this committee and yet, at the same time, has not allocated the funds necessary to implement these recommendations. How does that work? It's like saying to your child, I support your interest in going to University, but I won't pay your tuition. It's another facade as far as I'm concerned.

The third is the Corrections Review Committee Report. A committee was appointed in May 2002 and the Klein government spent a lot of money sending backbench MLAs across the province and across the country discussing Alberta Corrections. The Corrections Review we have not seen at all. Legislation flowed from it and was passed in the Spring of 2003, but we have never seen the report. The Solicitor General as made it clear that there are no legislative changes contemplated to develop a comprehensive correctional program designed to deal with conditional sentencing and probation issues. The recommendations from the Tories' own people are being ignored.

Finally, there is the MLA Police Review. Much like the Corrections Review, MLA backbenchers used Alberta taxpayers' money to travel across the province and the country on the issue of policing. The Police Review was released in July 2002; however, the negative public reaction to this review caused the government to take another look. We have not heard from them on this issue again. The Auditor General in his 2002-2003 Report notes that without the implementation of a province-wide strategy, we don't know if we have sufficient policing, and public safety could be at risk. Once again, these recommendations have been put on the shelf – another Tory make-work project for backbench MLAs.

It is time ladies and gentlemen. Time for this government to make a New Year's Resolution to stop spending our money on reports, commissions and recommendations that it is going to ignore and start taking an organized, systemic approach to governing Alberta.

If you have a particular issue and would like to be on an e-mail list for me to send you copies of questions asked in Question Period, please send me your e-mail address and let me know whether you are a constituent or where in Alberta you live. You can reach me at my new e-mail address blakeman@laurieblakeman.com, or call (780)414-0743 or drop by #3, 9908-109 Street, Edmonton, AB. T5K 1H5.

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BACK TO THE BASICS

An HIV Primer

Robert Wm. Smith

HIV Edmonton

Every once in a while it seems we have to return to some very basic facts, the everyday kind of knowledge that will sometimes slip into the back of our consciousness.

I do a lot of work in chat rooms and on bulletin boards in the great cyber-drawing room at our fingertips. The most frequent questions from men focus on the more practical information about protecting oneself from HIV and STDs; stuff that everyone should know (and I am convinced that they do) but for whatever reason, they just don't remember.

As an example, very recently I had a chat, online, with a guy who frequently engages in "raw" or "bareback" sex with anonymous partners; in other words he liked to get fucked without a condom. His question..."What are my risks?" What in the hell does he think his risks are? He knows what his risks are and all I was to him was much needed validation that he was indeed playing Russian Roulette.

I tried to engage this person in a conversation about why he made the decisions he did and all I got back was, and I quote, "I didn't ask for a lecture...just tell me my risks". So I told him, and I quote, "man you are a walking time bomb". This guy had never had an HIV/STD test, ever. During that day on gay.com in the Alberta Province-wide Chat Room, I had seven contacts in 45 minutes and three of those admitted to anonymous raw anal sex on a regular basis, while a fourth complained about my inability to do anything about the seemingly widespread phenomenon called "barebacking". Only two of these guys got tested and one was the individual with big concern.

HIV EDMONTON

It might seem like an unreasonable expectation for you to place on yourself or for others to place on you; it is really difficult from an emotional and psychological level to not give in to experiencing full intimacy with another human being. And face it, "Queer" folk no matter how they define themselves, have been missing out on the intimacy thing for a good part of their lives. But the reality is that we have HIV in our midst and the only hope of wiping it from our midst is to take our lives in hand and prevent it from getting into us.

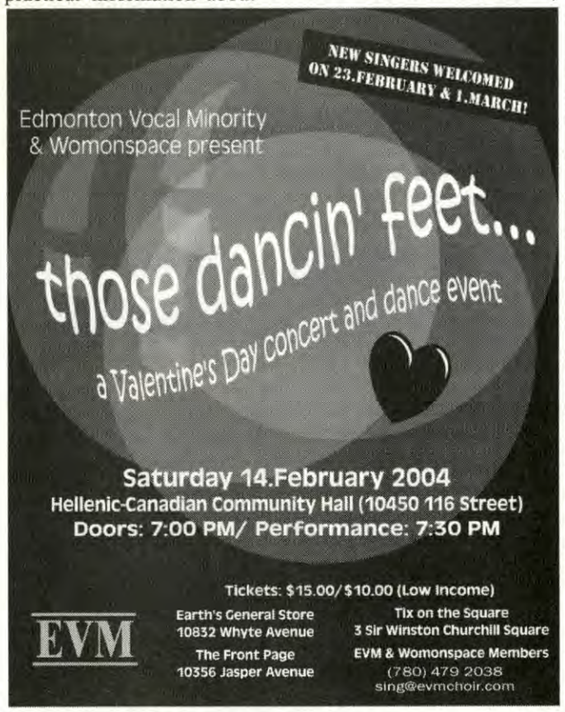
So I want to refresh everyone's memories, reinforce some facts and dispel some very dangerous misconceptions. First, let me deal with a few misconceptions.

Contrary to popular belief...HIV IS NOT CURABLE...THERE IS NO VACCINE...THERE IS NO MORNING AFTER PILL...ONCE YOU GET IT, IT IS YOURS...to keep. YOU CAN'T CATCH HIV MORE THAN ONCE. WRONG! The HIV you have is not necessarily the HIV that the other guy has. HIV is extremely resourceful, its sole purpose is to survive, and it does. HIV is always mutating and finding new ways to overtake your natural immune systems. The drugs used in the therapy regimes also cause HIV to mutate at a much more accelerated rate. All this mutation creates millions of new HIV viruses throughout the world and most are different than the one you have and often requiring a whole new drug regime.

HIV IS A MANAGABLE DISEASE if you want to spend the rest of your life managing a disease that changes each time it is attacked. Unfortunately you get to manage therapies on a very rigorous vigil. Ask anyone you know going through it. It may seem like you are managing a disease but it is on way to manage life.

TOPS DON'T GET HIV if they are wearing a condom and make decisions that protect themselves.

HIV IS AN OLD GUYS DISEASE. WRONG, AGAIN! According to Alberta Health and Wellness, youth accounted for 27% of



HIV EDMONTON

new infections in gay/ bisexual/men who have sex with men (MSM). I do not consider 30-39 year olds dinosaurs either and they rang in at 37% of new infections in the same group. Now here's the crunch. GAY/ BISEXUAL/MSM INFECTIONS IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 2003 LEAPT TO 55% FROM 19.7% FROM THE YEAR BEFORE.

The basic information in prevention hasn't changed in twenty years and won't for awhile.

At the top of the heap, the number one way of sexually contracting HIV is through unprotected anal intercourse…bar none. That hasn't changed, nor is the way of avoiding it. WHEN YOU ARE HAVING ANAL INTERCOURSE EITHER AS A TOP OR A BOTTOM, WEAR A CONDOM.

Yes, there are circumstances when this isn't necessary. You are in a long-term monogamous relationship where there is complete trust. I know…get real! But reality is having to protect yourself and your sexual partner by taking one very important stand each and every time you have anal sex. WEAR A CONDOM AND/OR INSIST HE DOES.

ORAL SEX IS LOW RISK BUT NOT NO RISK. This is one of my most frequent questions, I wrote an article on it in 2000 (*See "To Suck or Not to Suck, Apr'00)* and the answer is the same. The risk of HIV transmission through oral sex comes from sores or tears in the throat, mouth and gums that can be a sight for HIV to get in when you are going down on a guy with HIV. Similarly, if you have sores/scrapes or cuts on your penis when an HIV positive guy is blowing you. Otherwise, as far as HIV is concerned, blowjobs have been the favourite sexual activity among gay/bi/MSM for a couple of decades.

And really, with sex and HIV…those are the basics. Sure there are other remote circumstances but if you stick to the one simple principle of insisting on a condom whenever a dick is about to meet an ass, then HIV rates will go down and our men will be safer.

Now all that said, STDs LIKE HERPES, SYPHILIS, GONHORREA AND CHLAMYDIA CAN BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH BLOW JOBS AND ANAL SEX and it doesn't need a seemingly unhealthy ass, mouth or penis to make it happen. Some STDs pass between people just by touching. If anonymous blowjobs are your thing then this is of particular interest to you. GIVING BLOW JOBS IS A HIGH RISK ACTIVITY FOR MOST STDs.

And lastly in this "Back to the Basics" tour, TESTING REMAINS THE PRIMARY MEANS OF GETTING A HANDLE ON HIV AND STDs. Free, anonymous and confidential testing is available at the STD Centre in the old General Hospital at 11111 Jasper Avenue. The people who work there don't give a damn who you are doing or where. They will ask you questions to determine what tests to prescribe and ... "Bob's your uncle!" as my good friend Susan frequently says. You might want to call 413-5156 for an appointment and avoid a longer wait. PLEASE GUYS MAKE THE STD CENTRE A HAPPENING PLACE. GO AND GET TESTED.

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The Passion of the Christ

Rev. Mickey Wilson

Lambda Christian Community Church

I got a message on the church answering machine from "Campus Crusade for Christ" (I raised my eyebrows too!) inviting me as the Pastor of Lambda Christian Community Church and a few other guests to pre-screen Mel Gibson's upcoming "The Passion of the Christ." The movie will be released in theatres on February 25, Ash Wednesday which marks the beginning of Lent on the Christian calendar. So myself, my partner and two other people from the church went. We found ourselves in an absolutely huge church filled with hundreds of leaders from churches all over the greater Edmonton area. We ended up on the balcony at the back of the church (waaaay back), looking at a small screen. The evening started with the pitch that we had been invited to preview this movie because the churches needed to "seize the opportunity" for evangelism, to bring people to Christ. And then as the chapel darkened the reason I had gone began…

The Plot: A vivid depiction of the last 12 hours of Jesus Christ's life. Sometime around the year A.D. 30, in the Roman province of Palestine, an obscure Jewish carpenter named Jesus of Nazareth began to teach publicly and to proclaim the coming of a 'Kingdom of God.' For centuries, the Jewish people had expected the appearance of a promised deliverer known as the Messiah - a figure who would restore their ancient dignity, and free their sacred homeland from all evil and despair.

In the minds of many, Jesus appeared to be this Messiah.

Surrounded by a core group of twelve disciples, Jesus began to attract a massive following from among the common people of Galilee and Judea, who eventually praised him as their Messiah and King. However, Jesus also had many enemies in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin, a governing senate composed of the leading Jewish priests and Pharisees, conspired to put Jesus to death.

With the aid of Judas Iscariot, a member of Jesus' own inner circle, the Sanhedrin succeeded in arresting Jesus, handing him over to the Roman secular authorities on unsubstantiated charges of treason against Rome. Although Jesus consistently maintained that his Kingdom was a heavenly and spiritual one, the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate, faced with the possibility of a riot, ordered that Jesus be taken outside the city and crucified as a common criminal.

Now, the version we saw of the film wasn't complete. The score was temporary, some effects weren't there, and it was a rough cut. So I won't comment on many of the most obvious visual shortcomings because there is so much else to talk about. First, Gibson's decision to have all the characters speaking Aramaic was inspired because it made the film more authentic. I think that Jesus felt more like Jesus because the language was correct. James Caviezel's depiction of Jesus was terrific. Even as he was enduring the most horrific tortures, he burned with the strength of his convictions. You did not want to see this man die.

Aside from Caviezel, I was most impressed with Ivano Marescotti as Pontius Pilate. He created a character that was possibly the most sympathetic in the film. It was clear that Pilate did not want to sentence Jesus to death but he felt pressured into the action. He is typically depicted as a criminal but Marescotti portrayed him as a man trapped into making a decision he would regret for the rest of his life.

The rest of the cast was very good and they all seemed as committed to the project as Gibson himself was.

The visual look to this film was one part silent movie, one part mystic awakening and one part nightmare. It places you where you need to be, immediately uncomfortable yet familiar enough to go on. Visually this movie stimulates you emotionally like nothing out there right now. It creeps…it doesn't flash in your eyes, it engulfs. The camera doesn't just film Caviezel, it embraces and caresses him. Even in his darkest hour he expresses such a sense of knowing. Not the typical righteous stoicism we see in the usual film portrayals of Jesus, but a deep sense of spiritual knowing. So that even if you don't believe in "the Jesus Story," you can believe that Jesus was someone who possessed an inner quality of love, peace and forgiveness.

The story takes the Passion (something that I am very familiar with) and makes it something I could never imagine: it makes it real. We see Jesus' humanity: that he liked to joke, that he loved his mother, and that he truly suffered. Those turned off by the sometimes pompous, judgmental, "fire and brimstone" vision of Jesus will be able to remove the man from the religion that has been constructed by his followers. We also see in this movie the pain of his mother, a woman who doesn't see the supposed blasphemer or messiah, but sees her only son suffer and die. The movie gives a heart to the most unlikely characters, the Romans. We also see a more female vision of Christianity. The women were the brave followers of Jesus in this film, and were not relegated to a few weeping biddies on the sidelines. They were the ones begging for Jesus, stepping in front of Roman soldiers to give him comfort, the ones weeping at the foot of the cross.

I don't know how critical I can actually be about this movie because I cried. Parts of it hit me like an emotional anvil. It opened up and healed many battle scars I have had with my spiritual convictions. I remembered through this movie that it was all about love and that it isn't the message that hurt me so many years ago but the way the message was presented. The message has been resurrected, the movie made it move and breathe, it made it real. "The Passion of the Christ" depicts only 12 hours in the life of Jesus Christ, but was so deeply moving and profound I cannot do justice to it by attempting to describe it in words.

The closest I can come to a description is to say that viewing it makes you feel almost like a live witness to the historical events (abbreviated from 12 hours to two hours) as they unfolded. It was not like watching a movie from a detached perspective, but being inescapably drawn into the realism of the action.

No punches are pulled here, no emotions are spared, no sensitivities are coddled. It is a depiction of suffering, agony, passion and raw, uncensored violence visited on one man who volunteered for the indescribable torment out of his sheer love for humankind.

I am sure that Gibson chose stark realism not for the sake of shock and awe or sensationalism, but to recreate as accurate a portrayal of the events as humanly possible. The viewer sees the scourging because there was scourging, sees blood because there was blood, sees pain because there was pain.

Renowned evangelist Billy Graham has screened Mel Gibson's new film and says "I have often wondered what it must have been like to be a bystander during those last hours before Jesus' death," Graham said in a statement released from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. "After watching 'The Passion of the Christ,' I feel as if I have actually been there. I was moved to tears. I doubt if there has ever been a more graphic and moving presentation of Jesus' death ...."

IT IS BRUTAL. There is no way to make this clear without actually showing the film. Its brutality just cannot be described in words. You can't call it violent, you can't call it bloody. It is BRUTAL. That's the only word. And it NEEDS to be brutal. It needs to make you squirm in your seat for an hour. It needs to make you want to scream at the screen for it to end. It HAS to do these things. If it doesn't then you can't understand the point of this film. This film has to transcend the human tolerance for violence and brutality to make its point. And it does. And it works perfectly. This film is amazing. It's powerful. It doesn't matter if you follow Jesus or Mohammad, Buddha or Moses, or no prophets at all. This film has to be seen.

I do not question the highly personal nature of this film. Director Mel Gibson is telling the story of the Passion of Christ because he has a strong emotional connection to the story. I would not categorize this as an ego project but rather a spiritual project. Taking on a movie about Jesus that isn't pontificating and damning you for all eternity for not believing must've been a task unlike any other. This isn't an "Onward Christian Soldiers" film. This was a film about a man who spread a message that was misunderstood, and about the people who loved him.

Mel Gibson has created a challenging and courageous film. I believe the film will create a lot of discussion - both positive and negative. At it's best, it should encourage debate. It should encourage passion. You may not like it but you should go see it.

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A View From the Top

By Scott Bryen
Mr. Edmonton Leather 2003

Communities

Communities are fickle things. They are capricious, willful and occasionally spiteful but they can also be supportive, caring and, yes, even loving. They are, by definition, a group of individuals with a commonality that binds them together. As such, the same failings that any individual is subject to also affects a community. Most of all communities are alive and, as such, they grow and change as all living things do. If they are not growing and changing, they are dying. Those are the only choices that a living entity has.

In my travels as Mr. Edmonton Leather 2003, I have had the rare privilege to be invited, and travel, to many different communities and from that have gained some insight into my own remote northern community, other communities and have come to a few conclusions that I would like to share with you here.

What I have concluded is that communities such as our small leather community are not well served by "selfish" people. People who, for one reason or another, feel that their way is the "only" way and that no other views are valid. These

individuals stifle the growth of any community by chasing away new blood, and with that new blood new views and new ways of doing things. This is not to say that our history should be ignored; far from it. Our history is the foundation upon which we should build the health of our community. However, we should be able, as a group, to welcome and understand new ideas without being threatened by them. I realize it is difficult to get anyone to stand up and be counted, but it is a necessary fact of belonging to any group. There are advantages to belonging to any group, but what most people forget is that there are also duties involved in belonging as well. To put it simply, one must be prepared to "put their money where their mouth is".

Involvement is a key factor but equally important is the ability to listen.

By listening, I mean not the ability to say yes to everything that is offered, but the ability to understand what another party is saying and to be able to evaluate the message; then to be able to accept or reject, in part or in whole, that point of view and to be able to defend your opinion.

This, boys and girls, is part of what it means to be adult.

The ability to choose is probably one of the key elements of who we are as adults, as men and women of leather and, therefore, should also define who we are as a community. If you look at it, any community is merely a mirror of the people who speak for it. Allowing people with a specific agenda that may not mirror your own to speak for you means that you have abdicated your voice in the community at large. It is a duty for everyone to involve themselves so their voice is not lost. It also works in well with the concept of self-empowerment and a number of other values this community holds in high esteem. Values like honesty and integrity, openness and communication.

I will leave you with one parting thought: if its worth believing in, then its worth speaking for. Please involve yourselves with your community. It's what keeps us strong and vital.

Coming Out

My coming out took place over 12 years ago, but I'm going to tell my story anyway to all the young people who are struggling. First of all, let me tell you a little about myself. I was raised in a very strict Baptist family (Sunday school mandatory), this was an age where the Internet did not exist and there were no TV shows where gay characters existed (ok maybe for one odd gay character on soap called Dynasty). Unlike today there were no gay role models. Looking back it seems that the whole world was in the closet or if they were out it was a "secret taboo society". 80's was the decade of "AIDS", the word "gay/homosexual" was immediately associated with "AIDS" death by sin!!!!!!! I had my first boy crush when I was in the 5th grade. I always knew I was "different", back then I didn't even know what gay meant.

Going thru puberty I had a very rough time, being somewhat of a masculine jock type guy, I had a difficult time admitting to myself that I was gay. For a long time I thought that this was just a "teen phase" that my attraction to guys would go away. Well they never did. As a teen I was depressed, in church I only heard one message: "homosexuals are going to hell". I wanted to sleep away my pain. I developed a panic disorder due to anxiety that made my life a living hell. For a long time, I thought I was the only guy with these feelings.

Being a Christian I have asked God many times why he has chosen me to carry this heavy burden? Well being older and wiser now, I have come to realize that God meant for me to be gay. Simply put He has created you in his image and trust me God does not produce junk! Some of the most talented musicians, painters and writers were gay and Modern society owes a great debt to them. Heck, if Michael Angelo were straight the Sistine chapel would have been painted plain white.

The conventional teachings in the bible state that, all sodomites 'gays' will burn in hell. This type of thought is erroneous. God loves everyone regardless of sexual orientation or skin color. The verse from "Leviticus" that everyone always quotes is misleading. I once attended a lecture where a world-renowned scholar that follows bible translation explained that the translation have been taken out of context from the original Greek language; and abused by the church for ages. OK enough about the religious lingo back to me coming out. I always had a fear that if I came out to my family, that they would disown me. I was in the closet till the age of 20 pure psycho hells.

It was 1990 New Year's; my siblings and I were invited to a grand party at a friend's house. They all came along with dates I came alone. I had a good time that eve dancing with my brother's girlfriend. At one point everyone gathered in the 'great hall' for small talk, which I always find boring. The guy that hosted a party was standing atop a staircase and suddenly in front of all the guests with a loud proclaiming voice he spoke my name 'Rob'. So have you found a boyfriend yet?' I was taken totally by surprise and turned red for a moment, I thought the world stood still but then after composing myself I found the courage to say 'not yet'. This was the first time that I realized that the people around me cared little if I was gay or straight, those that liked me accepted me for whom I was. In that moment I felt liberated as if the world's weight had been taken off my shoulders and they all knew that I was gay and that it was ok. Looking back, I wish it would have been me first who told everyone that I was gay. Later that night, my siblings and me stopped for a coffee on a way home. Sitting down at the table, I asked them straight out how they felt about me being 'gay'. Their response was better than I expected. I wondered if it was alcohol in their system that night to be so carefree. They told me that they always wondered/suspected if I was gay, since I never had a steady girlfriend.... I did not come out to my parents till 14 months later. They were shocked and confused in disbelief. I told them that it was my life and I too deserved to be happy. I think they were in denial for sometime that I was really gay, until I showed up with my first real boyfriend. After few good honest conversations they have come around pretty quickly and told me that they love me unconditionally period. The key to it all: are love, honesty and education. Leave the prejudice and stereotypes out the door and look at the person as a whole being gay is a just a small part of who you really are...there is so much more to you as a whole individual. If you cannot be honest with yourself first, how the heck do you expect others to be honest with you?

One last advice to you all; coming out is a long process. First of all you have to come out to yourself. Love yourself for who you are and then begin to come out to the world. When you are ready to come out, you will find that it is the best thing you ever did. The world will not crack time will go on as it always had. The world has changed a great deal in a short time due to Internet and cultural views; as a result it is so much easier to come out. There are visible gay role models in sports, politics and arts.

When you do decide to come out you will find that people in general will admire your honesty and courage even if they don't agree with your views. Don't worry about losing friendships, those who are your true friends will stick by you and the ones who don't were not your friends in the beginning. The odd thing about it all is that most of my friends are straight. I'm proud of who I'm, if I had a choice, I don't think I would have chosen to be straight. As for all the guys who are claiming to be straight acting/looking, there is no such thing (it's a stereotype). If God had wanted you to be attracted to straight acting/looking guys he would have made you a girl! After the entire world would be a boring place if we were all the same! Have courage and be proud of who you are!

News From the Court

With our June 5 Coronation quickly approaching, we here with the ISCWR enter fundraiser overdrive.

Our big project on the go right now is our production of Chicago, which will be running in early March. The cast features some old favorites as well as lots of fresh new faces so we're sure you'll be impressed by the energy and enthusiasm we bring to the stage. Oprah's rendition of the recent movie-musical blockbuster will

be a must-see for court show fans, and for anyone else who enjoys big splashy production numbers.

In addition to that production show, we have several other shows in the works, organized and hosted by diverse court members. Empress Point-Five Weena Luv is holding a Valentine's Red Night at Boots. College President Tootsanelda is in the process of booking some spectacular fundraisers for

the John M. Kerr Memorial Scholarship (and if Ida Claire's Mz Mary Christmas Pageant was any indication, you'll want to be at those shows for sure!). Oprah's "Women Of..." series will continue at Prism. And of course, we will have our regular weekly bingos at Boots and Friday fundraisers at the Roost.

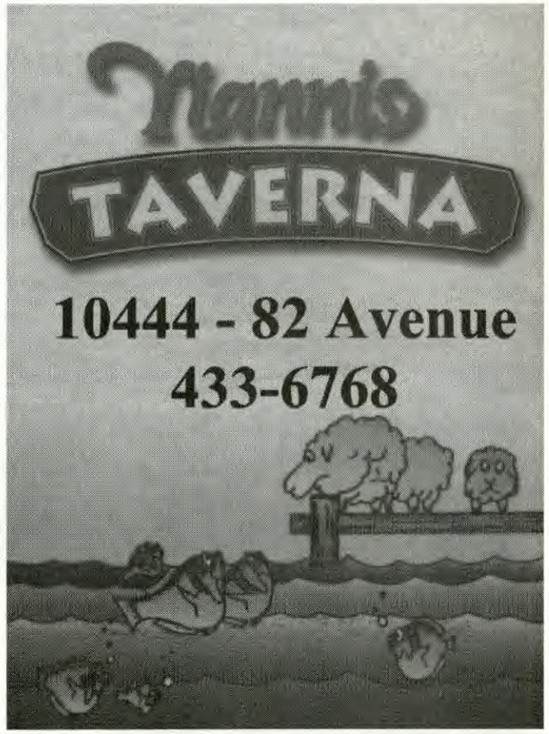
As Coronation approaches, it is also time to turn our attention to our out of town friends. Empress Oprah will be representing Edmonton at Seattle's Coronation in February. March will see a large number head to Vancouver to celebrate their ball, and even more Edmontonians will head down to Calgary for their Superball in April. By that time, our candidates will out and about, and the race for Empress XXIX will be on!

January finished with the 3rd Annual Mz. Drag Queen Edmonton Pageant, or as it's more commonly known Hey Drag Queen. This saw a showcasing of some new local talent, starred some favorites Queens, and even had some Calgary girls up supporting this scholarship fundraiser. Now as we enter February, the build-up begins for the Entertainer of the Year pageant. Who will come forward to replace Pepper as your choice for this year's Entertainer? Only time will tell so be sure to make nominations at the boxes throughout the city. This event will be later in March so be sure to see that issue of Times .10 for more details.

Oprah and myself would like to take this opportunity to thank all the businesses, organizations, and individuals who have supported this reign thus far. Our charity of choice this year is the Alberta Foundation for Diabetes Research, and I am sure all of you reading this known someone who is diabetic. By buying court shooters, by buying our 50-50 tickets or by tossing in a loonie at a Chinese auction, you are supporting this cause, and we thank you for it.

On behalf of the 28th House,

Emperor Regent Rob Bigonion



PENSION CASE

Surviving spouses shouldn't have to wait any longer

Ottawa, January 19, 2004: The federal government has appealed the December 19, 2003 Hislop decision of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, which awarded surviving spousal pensions to same-sex partners who lost their loved ones between 1985 and 1998.

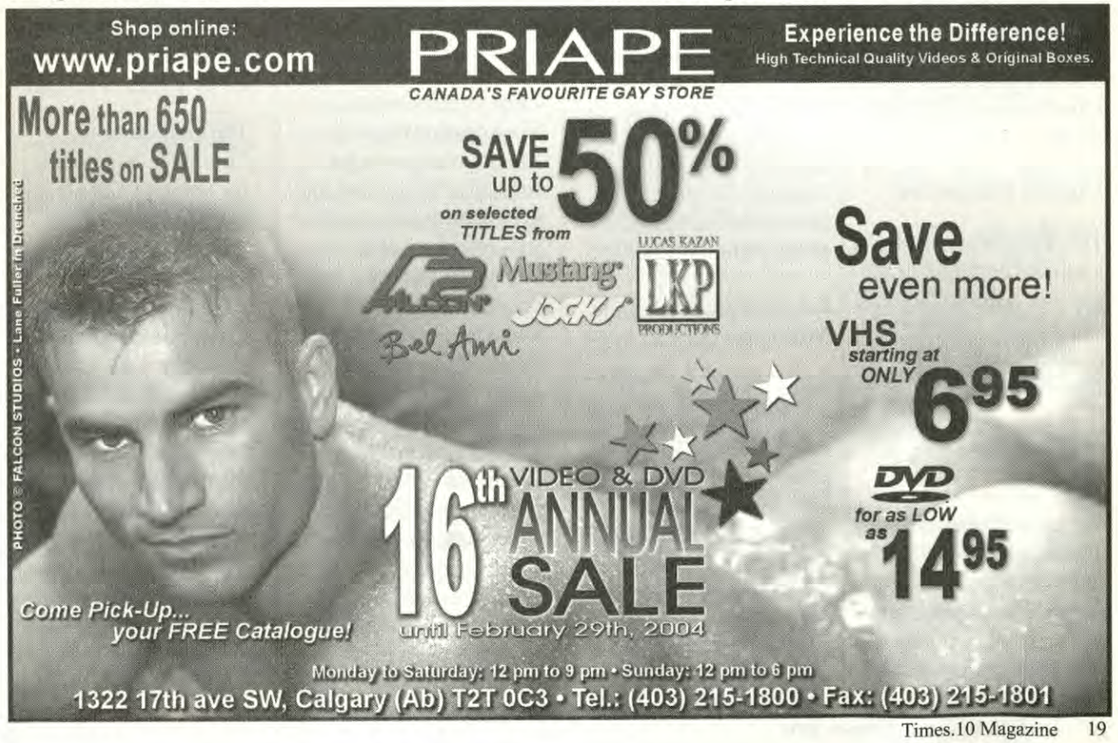
"This is a sad day for equality," said Laurie Arron, Egale's Director of Advocacy. "The government knew it wasn't allowed to discriminate, but it didn't change the law until the courts forced its hand. Now it says it's not fair to go back in time and hold it accountable. Why should these hard-working Canadians, who paid into the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) like everyone else, be denied what is their due?"

"The government now accepts that same-sex spouses who pay into CPP are entitled to the same benefits as everyone else," continued Mr. Arron, "So this isn't about principle. It's about money. It's about squeezing some elderly gay and lesbian people who they don't think the public will make a fuss over."

"This is just wrong," said Gilles Marchildon, Executive Director of Egale Canada. "The government just doesn't get it. Now it will spend our tax money to demonstrate how wrong it is. It would be less costly to simply provide the benefits to the entitled partners instead of delaying this by dragging the issue through the court system. A cynical view of their decision might even lead us to think that they were hoping that the surviving partners, senior citizens in many cases, might die before the benefits must be paid out."

"Where have we seen this kind of obstinacy before?" continued Mr. Marchildon. "On the issue of equal marriage for same-sex couples. It took ten justices in four courts in three jurisdictions for them to get the point. In the Hislop case, what is it going to take in order for them to acquiesce to full equality?"

For more information:
Gilles Marchildon, Executive Director, Egale Canada: 613.230.1043, gilles@egale.ca
Laurie Arron, Director of Advocacy, Egale Canada: 416.839.7178, laurie@egale.ca



Recognized Community Builders

Alcoholics Anonymous

AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Call 424-5900 for times and places of Gay and Lesbian meetings.

Bi-Sexual Support Group

The Bi-Sexual Support Group meets on a monthly basis to talk about issues surrounding the Bisexual Community. Contact GLCCE for more information at (780) 488-3234.

Dignity Edmonton

This Edmonton chapter is a support community for gay and lesbian Catholics and friends. Contact Bernard at 451-1794 or Joseph at 481-4218

Edmonton Prime Timers

We are a chapter of Prime Timers Worldwide, an international social organization for mature gay and bisexual men and their younger friends over 21. Our activities include: theatre nights, video nights, pub nights, Sunday brunches, and dining out. We meet the second Sunday of every month (except July and August) at 3:00 PM at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton (12530 110 Ave.) for a social period, a guest speaker, and an optional supper at a restaurant. For more information, contact Peter at 426-7019, or better yet...join us at our monthly meeting.

Edmonton Rainbow Business Association (ERBA)

Gay men and Lesbians in business and our non-gay friends; Join us ...share your business knowledge, learn more, make new friends, network ... in positive, proud space where being yourself is the norm. Call Bill Faulkner for more information at 422-6207. Membership $25.00/yr.

Edmonton Vocal Minority

Women and men of all sexual orientations dedicated to sharing and preserving the cultural heritage of the queer community. Everyone is welcome to join this mixed voice choir as either a singer or a support member. Come and sing your pride! For information: Telephone: (780) 479.2038, E-mail: evm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca, on the web at: http://www.planet.eon.net/~toocute/evm/, or write to PO Box 12091, Main Post Office Edmonton, AB T5J 3L2.

Gay & Lesbian Centre

Providing Resources, Referrals and Support to all members of the general public regarding Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues. Suite 45, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, (780) 488-3234. WebPages with more information at http://edmc.net/glcce/

HIV Edmonton

HIV Edmonton works cooperatively with all those organizations in Alberta and across the country who are working to help limit the spread of HIV infection. HIV Edmonton utilizes a best practices Harm Reduction approach in Health Promotion, Advocacy and Support, as well as, maintaining an extensive Resource Centre for use by health practitioners, health promoters, community organizations and those infected and affected by HIV. For more information on the activities of HIV Edmonton, please call (780) 488-5742 or contact us by email at mail@hivedmonton.com. Visit our Website at HIV Edmonton http://www.hivedmonton.com/

Illusions Social Club

A social club for Cross-dressers, Transsexuals and their supporters. We hold two socials each month, one on the second Thursday and one on the third Saturday. For more information, write to Illusions Social Club. Box 356, Main Post Office, Edmonton, AB, T5J 2J6. Phone: 424-2685 to talk to someone person to person.

Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose

The mission of the Court is to raise funds for charities and other organizations, which provide direct services to gay and lesbian individuals. Meetings of the Society are held at 8 PM on the last Wednesday of the month at the Garage. Our e-mail is: wildrosecourt@yahoo.com. Visit our Website is at: Wild Rose Court http://www.geocities.com/wildrosecourt/

ICARE Interfaith Centre for AIDS/ HIV Resources & Education

Formerly Interfaith Association on AIDS, the purpose of ICARE is to enhance the well-being of people affected by HIV by offering resources and opportunities for education to service providers and communities. You can contact us at 780-448-1768 or by e-mail at icare@oanet.com

Lambda Christian Community Church

We are a non-denominational Christian church providing a safe and healing space for Edmonton's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Christians and their friends. 11148-84 Avenue (Garneau United Place) Edmonton, T6G 0V8. Call 474-0753. Weekly Sunday service at 7 p. m. e-mail at lambdachurch@shaw.ca

Living Positive

Emotional, spiritual and psychological support is available through Living Positive to all those affected by HIV infection. We offer strong, loving, confidential support. We also meet weekly and share our mutual experiences. Living Positive is entirely directed by and for people who share a common diagnosis of HIV+. Peer counselling, hospital visits and a speakers bureau are also available through our society. Phone 488-5768 or e-mail: livepos@telusplanet.net.

Lutherans Concerned: Edmonton

We are a spiritual community for lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight people. Lutherans Concerned gathers monthly for worship, sharing, and friendship. We offer individual support and a safe space for our own spiritual questions. Call 426-0905, or write P.O. Box 11095, Edmonton, AB, T5J 3K4 e-mail: lylemillang@powersurfr.com

Making Waves Swim Club (MWSC)

Open to all who are interested in lane swimming in a Masters club, we provide coaching to all levels of swimmers - those wishing to learn, those wishing to improve stroke technique and those wishing to train competitively. Drop in opportunity gives you flexibility to match your schedule. We swim at Bonnie Doon Leisure Centre, 8648 - 81 Street, Edmonton from September to June. Our members enjoy numerous social events arranged by the club. Please feel free to contact us to find out more information: Contact us at: 1. WebPages: http://www.geocities.com/makingwaves_edm/home.htm. 2. E-mail: makingwaves_edm@yahoo.com 3. Phone: Warren 780-920-2847. 4. Attend a practice - your first swim is free!

Northern Chaps

Edmonton's Leather - Fetish club for Gay, Lesbian, and straight men and women was established sixteen years ago. We strike to educate the rest of the community through workshops, staged demonstrations and events in order to heighten awareness. Northern Chaps meets the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. E-mail us at: Northernchaps@telusplanet.net

Northern Titans

We bowl every year from September till April, and you do not have to belong to a team to join - just show up. We have bowlers whose skills range from beginner to average - and we will give the new people pointers to improve their skills. The cost is $15 (students $10) for three games of bowling. We have a lot of fun socializing during bowling and afterwards most of us go out for supper. It is an excellent way to get to know people. Northern Titans bowls at Gateway Rec. Centre, 100 3414 Gateway Blvd Edmonton. For more information call Peter at 483-1075 - Or email at northerntitans_edmonton@yahoo.com

OUTreach

OUTreach is a university-based organization for gays, lesbians and bisexuals interested in an academic atmosphere. Meetings are held every Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. at the Second Cup on campus. Topics vary from week to week. Additional information is available by e-mail: outreach@ualberta.ca. They also have a WebPages at OUTreach U of A http://www.ualberta.ca/~outreach

Ready - Set – Square!

Brand new caller, brand new location. Square dancing every Wednesday 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Singles, couples, beginners & experienced dancers are all welcome. Proud member of the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs. For more information including location and times call: 433-3068 or email: readysetsquare@hotmail.com.

Yours, Mine, Ours and Us

Yours, Mine Ours and Us is a GLBT Parenting group, this group is for pier support of other GLBT parents and their friends. For information please call Garry at 780-426-6311.

Youth Understanding Youth

We meet every Saturday from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Gay and Lesbian Centre of Edmonton, Suite 103, 10612-124 Street. A social support group for anyone under the age of 25 years. For more information, or to give your input, e-mail: yuyedm@hotmail.com. Our WebPages are at Youth Understanding Youth http://www.virtue.nu/yuy/

Visions - Unitarian Church of Edmonton

We are an open, liberal religious community that value diversity and celebrate our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered members. With us, you are encouraged with open mind and heart to form your own set of personal beliefs. Sunday services at 9:30am and 11:15am. 12530 - 110 Avenue Ph. 454-8073. For more information, call Mike at 482-6582.

Womonspace

We are a social and recreational society for lesbians in Edmonton. We hold monthly dances and other activities. Look for our monthly newsletter around town, or phone 482-1794. Visit our WebPages at Womonspace http://www.gaycanada.com/womonspace/

Regional Organizations

Grande Prairie

Gay and Lesbian Community, Box 1492, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4Z3. E-mail: gpgayorg@hotmail.com

Out North

Box 2827, Yellowknife, NT., X1A 2R2, Phone line: 867-669-7279. WebPages: http://www.yellowknife.com/ptartan/outnorth.htm E-mail:out_north99@hotmail.com

Group Listings will be updated in the March issue e-mail:

times10@telusplanet.net

Ani DiFranco – Educated Guess

My educated guess, I honestly wasn't all that impressed with this CD. Chances are if you are not a big fan, you won't be either. Listening to it at home or in the car just didn't feel right. So it was off to Second Cup to give her a spin there.... It seems to fit well with the atmosphere of this little coffee house. Educated Guess, I find, is a pretty mellowed out album. There are a few noteworthy tracks on here, #7 Bodily, #9 Animal, and #12 Rain Check.

The only thing that really got me to stand up and take notice was what was surrounding the CD. The inlay includes lyrics to the songs, something I appreciate, but what I liked best was the artwork that was done by Ani herself. So should you brave the weather to buy this disc? Nah, head down to a coffee shop for a hot chocolate instead, chances are Ani is spinning there.

Style	2 ½ /5
Lyrics	3/5
Album Art/Design	4/5

Jann Arden Review

Let's take it from the top. The nights opening act, Emm Gryner, is no stranger to Edmonton. I first caught her a few years ago, while she was singing for her supper down at The Side Track Café, she was remarkable then, and proved to be even more so tonight. Talented and funny, she was the perfect choice to accompany Jann on tour. The highlight of her act was a mellowed out version of Blur's Song #2. Something different, something good. I recommend that you give her CD a spin.

Now, it's on to the main event. First off the location the acoustics at the Winspear Center are phenomenal. No matter where your seats are, you are guaranteed an impressive sound experience. Add to that the incredible vocal styling of Jann Arden and you have a concert, which could not have been anything short of amazing. Jann has this uncanny ability to stir emotions in a person's heart using only her lyrics and the sound of her voice. In my eyes, a true Canadian gem. If you missed seeing her this time around, I suggest the next time Jann pulls her tour bus into town you go and get seats.

Lighting	4/5
Sound	5/5
Show	5/5

Samer Temraz

"Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change"

It's not yet required that GLCCE Board members have a working knowledge of the writings of Alfred, Lord Tennyson; but one finds one's oracles where one may.

Our first change — and the last in a series, we hope — is for the date, time, and place for GLCCE/s Annual General Meeting. It is now set for March 11, 2004, at 7.00pm, and will be held in the Unitarian Church, 12530-110 Avenue.

The AGM was originally set for January 29. However, at the special general meeting of GLCCE that took place on December 4, the very real possibility that the Society would have to close the Center led to a working group's being established, to assist the Board with its on-going fundraising and membership drive.

It then seemed that more time would be needed to analyse the results of the campaign, so that a report to the AGM can be made, which will be a sound basis for those decisions on the Center/s and the Society's future, which must be made at that meeting. And so, the new date.

The idea of change is pervading all GLCCE's thinking. Many of our readers will by now have received letters from the Society, whether in their capacity as GLCCE members, as interested individuals, as groups with related interests, or as businesses serving the GLBT community. These letters outline a restructured membership organisation, which is intended to expand and broaden the Society's membership, and so bring it more directly into touch with the community it serves; it is also intended to provide a firmer base for funding the Center/s operations. It has become clear over the last year that, while there are various grants for programmes which can be run from the Center, and are useful to the community, the costs of operating the Center itself — paying the rent, and bills for office expenses — must be met directly by the Society and its friends. In effect, the Center is the Society's gift to the community. We have been assured several times by the Federal tax authorities that this can in no way be described as an act of charity, so of course there has been no danger that the community would be demeaned by accepting the gift!

These letters, however, do not deal only with the matters of membership and funding. Their main immediate objective is to discover whether the Center has still a role to play in the GLBT community, or whether the Society should undertake the final great change, and dissolve. We need that input; it may well be that the time of the Center is past, and some other thing is needed. If the Center is still important to the community, then other changes will be needed to put it on a sound footing.

Our noble oracle does have a further comment, useful perhaps to some politicians and churchmen, and certainly giving us cause for thought:

"The old order changeth, yeilding place to new, And God fulfils himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

- Peter Pratt
GLCCE Board of Directors

The Board and members of GLCCE are saddened by the sudden passing last week of one of the co-chairs, Steve Rowan.

Steve has been a very active member of the Board for the past two years. In that time, he has worked tirelessly to create a vision of a strong and vibrant community centre and to enhance the Centre's profile in the community. He has forged liaisons with many community groups, both in the GLBT community and in the service community as a whole. As well, he has spearheaded numerous innovative fundraisers and been involved in every aspect of the Centre's day to day operations.

Steve brought with him a professional approach, an ability to inspire and motivate people, and a sense of humour that will be sorely missed by his colleagues on the Board and the members of the GLBT community.

We are all greatly saddened by the loss.

Gay Culture

Back in the 50's gays had something to be proud of. They fought an impossible battle and slowly year-by-year they won. It took love, pride, respect and unity and with that came victory. A victory I feel that gays today take for granted and don't fully understand. I will be covering many issues in this article stating with Edmonton's Gay community, social issues, gay youth, and much more. I'm sure you will enjoy this article and hopefully it will open your eyes and mind. Give all that I have to say a chance and remember it's only an opinion.

Section 1
Edmonton's Gay Community

Where has the all innocence gone is it lost forever? We now live in a world consumed by sex, drugs and booze. Our gay bars are thriving our bath houses are flourishing and our community has lost its way. Not to say the club owners are at fault or bathhouses. They indeed add to the problems and add fuel to the already out of control fires. We advertise ourselves as sexual beasts without any borders or morals. Most men in our gay community treat each other like a piece of meat. Only interested in a one-night stand or a quickie in the bathroom. They lack basic social skills and a lot do not have self-esteem. Thus, they surround themselves with as many friends as they can and like dogs they follow the leader of the pack. Many gays in our community have lost their identity. There is more to gay men's lives then sex, bars and friends or at least there should be. There is more to you than just being gay. Gay isn't who you are, who you are, is defined by the things you do and think. I ask you what are we all proud of? What is really important to all of us in the community? The only social haven we have is our nightclubs and bathhouses there has to be more than that. Our community must give the young a healthy place to hang out. Our couples should have a healthy environment to go to. Here we are in the year 2002 and nothing has really changed that has to tell us something!! It tells me that our community fears change and would rather go on as things are. Until we all see the light nothing will change and maybe one day our community will die out like the spirit did. It's really a shame because Edmonton once had a great community; sure it had its problems but nothing like this. I'm proud to say I found a life outside the community and I have never been happier than I am now. I'm hopping more people get the strength to walk away from the community and live a productive life. Our community is only good for a few things. One thing is it's really good at distracting you from the real world and temporarily taking away your problems. No Edmonton's community is no place for the loving, morel and trusting.

Section 2
Safe Sex & Monogamy

AIDS is now on the rise in gay communities around the globe, yet nothing seems to stop gays from having unprotected sex. We must all ask the question why? Is it because we think only with the head in-between our legs? Or is it simply we don't think we can contract this hideous illness? Whatever the reason it's simply not good enough. How many more must die before we learn or understand in this day and age sex is dangerous? Then we have the men who are into orgies, this I just don't understand at all. I guess I would not care as much if I new that most men wear condoms but they don't. Is it that one man cannot satisfy the other? Or is it that we are so into ourselves that we think the more men that sleep with us the better we are. I think it comes down to the way you were raised and self-esteem. As for gay couples I'm trying to understand why most of these relationships don't last? One thing is for sure gays have a hard time giving themselves away to their partner. Some do not understand what a healthy mature relationship looks like or should be like. Why you might ask? Most gay men moved out of there homes at an early age for what ever reason or stayed in the closet to long ether way they leave with loads of baggage. Most had a scary past and never had a chance to see a healthy relationship between their parents. You learn how to love in most part by your upbringing. Add to that low self-esteem loss of identity and loneliness and bad influences. Also you add to the bars and the bar type into the mix. Are you still wondering why gay relationships don't last? This all spells out disaster to most couples. Yet again it comes down to self-esteem taking charge and wanting the best for you. Yet most people fear change and would rather fallow the herd.

Section 3
Gays & Marriage

Lets talk about a hot topic gay rights in Alberta. If there is one thing in life I have learnt it's that nothing is ever handed to you. Anything you want is to be earned nothing in this world is free. Alberta is a red neck place and I don't agree much with what the government says or does. Yet when it comes to gays being legally married in Alberta I agree with our government. We are not ready for that just yet could you imagine the divorce rate? The only person to blame for this dissection is ourselves. You don't think they see what the most of us are like in our community? Come on now it's time to be real, just look at how the movies portray us, TV shows and how we portray ourselves we are our own worst enemies. I believe we could gain some respect from our government and all it would take is to clean up our dirty image. Yet it's going to be a long time before that would ever happen. Like I have said before people fear change and with most gay communities they are to busy thinking only of themselves or laying the blame on others. No I'm sure we will not see legal gay marriages any time soon in Alberta.

Section 4
Gays & Children

It's the year 2002 and still to this day it's not legal for gays to adopt. Now there are many reasons for this and I'm sure you know what they are. Here is my take on this topic; we all know we live in a red nick province right? So add things up, most gays portray us as sexual beasts that can't seem to stay with anyone partner for very long. Also you have our gay TV shows and movies that make us seem wild only thinking of sex, friends and ourselves. I'm sure we all must look soulless to people looking in from the outside. So yes I do agree with our government dissension to not let gays adopt. Really I don't think most gays could give a child a healthy upbringing anyway. Children need guidelines a stable home and environment. Children need rules and morels instilled in them. Lets face it a lot of gays throw morels out the window they have trouble staying committed and putting someone before himself or herself. Your hating me right now, aren't you? Understand I'm not saying all gays are like this what I am saying is, in this community in most community's this is what I have seen and what I know. Gays around the world have a lot of work ahead of them. How much longer can they keep going on the way they do. If you know anything about Greek history there lifestyle slowly killed them off. It's safer to instill morels and standards within yourself and others. The times of orgy's and being promiscuous are no longer safe. To tell you the truth it never really was safe now or back then.

Section 5
Summery Of Sections 1-4

So by now I'm sure if you are gay you're really hating me and that's fine by me. Going section by section if you have an open mind you would of found truth. It's up to you where your life goes and what you do with it. Yet remember if you are one of those outstanding guys and would one day like to have a child. Did you speak out? Did you try to make a difference? Did your friends help out and how much support did your community give you? From what I understand our gay community has loads of money. So I ask where does it go? Yes we have our gay bars our Bath houses yet no real healthy place to socialize. What about our youth? Theirs no place for them either but you all know this because it's always been that way. So they will sneak into the bars and mimic all they see. The cycle of or community it's predictable and a real drain on any person who gets involved in it. Dose our community still have free support groups for adults and youth? If so how well is it advertised? To end this article I would like to ask if you're not that stereotypical gay man or woman keep going strive to be the best person you can be. Maybe one day many will follow in our footsteps. Be proud of who you are and spread your wisdom in hopes that one day maybe not in our lifetime gays will have earned the rights to adopt and marry. Well that's the end of my article hope you enjoyed it?

Written by; M.Gesy

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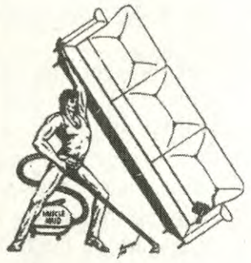

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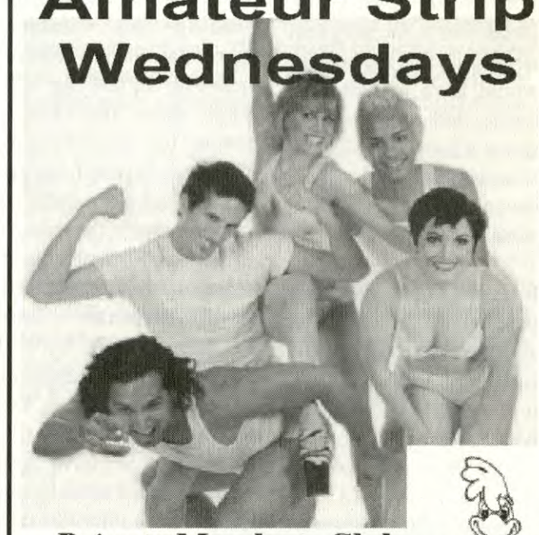

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You and Your Funny Bone..:)

Skater Boy

There were these two friends, one who was gay, who died in a horrible car accident. They both went to heaven and were standing at the pearly gates when St. Peter met them. St. Peter asked the first man for a picture of his wife. After looking at the picture, St. Peter asked him if he had ever cheated on her. The man replied, "I was unfaithful to my wife one time's. Peter decided to give the man a station wagon for him to drive around heaven. Now it was the second man's turn. St. Peter asked him for a picture of his wife and then asked if he had ever cheated on her. The man replied, "Actually I'm gay, but here's a picture of my lover, and I never cheated on him." St. Peter was very impressed and decided to give the man a Ferrari to drive around heaven. After a few months in heaven, the two friends met up with each other. The second man was bragging about his Ferrari when the other turned to him and said, "I wouldn't be bragging if I were you. I just saw your lover on a skateboard."

One Wish

A gay couple had been partnered for 25 years and was celebrating the 60th birthday of one of them. During the party, a fairy appeared and said that because they had been such a loving couple all those years, she would give them one wish each. The one who was giving the party said, "We've blown all our money on parties and fine dining and decorating this house, I've never gotten to see the world. I wish we could travel all over the world." The fairy waved her wand and POOF! He had the tickets in his hand. Next, it was the birthday boy's turn. He paused for a moment, and then with a sly grin said, "Well, I'd like a boyfriend 30 years younger than me." The fairy waved her wand and POOF! He was 90.

Bush

"There's no question that the minute I got elected, the storm clouds on the horizon were getting nearly directly overhead." -George W. Bush, May 11, 2001

Oh Canada!

On the sixth day God turned to Archangel Gabriel and said: "Today I am going to create a land called Canada, it will be a land of outstanding natural beauty. It shall have tall majestic mountains full of mountain goats and eagles, beautiful sparkling lakes bountiful with bass and trout, forests full of elk and moose, high cliffs over-looking sandy beaches with an abundance of sea life, and rivers stocked with salmon." God continued, "I shall make the land rich in oil so as to make the inhabitants prosper, I shall call these inhabitants Canadians, and they shall be known as the most friendly people on the earth." "But Lord," asked Gabriel, "don't you think you are being too generous to these Canadians?" "Not really," replied God, "just wait and see the neighbors I am going to give them."

Wonder?

After watching sales falling off for three straight months at Kentucky Fried Chicken, the Colonel calls up the Pope and asks for a favor. The Pope says, "What can I do?" The Colonel says, "I need you to change the daily prayer from, 'Give us this day our daily bread' to 'Give us this day our daily chicken'. If you do it, I'll donate 10 Million Dollars to the Vatican." The Pope replies, "I am sorry. That is the Lord's Prayer and I can not change the words." So the Colonel hangs up. After another month of dismal sales, the Colonel gets desperate, and calls again. "Listen your Excellency. I really need your help. I'll donate $50 million dollars if you change the words of the daily prayer from 'Give us this day our daily bread' to 'Give us this day our daily chicken.'" And the Pope responds, "It is very tempting, Colonel Sanders. The church could do a lot of good with that much money. It would help us to support many charities. But, again, I must decline. It is the Lord's Prayer, and I can't change the words." So the Colonel gives up again, after two more months of terrible sales. The Colonel panics. "This is my final offer, your Excellency. If you change the words of the daily prayer from, 'Give us this day our daily bread' to 'Give us this day our daily chicken' I will donate $100 million to the Vatican."The Pope replies, "Let me get back to you." So the next day, the Pope calls together all of his bishops and he says, "I have some good news and I have some bad news. The good news is that KFC is going to donate $100 million to the Vatican." The bishops rejoice at the news. Then one asks about the bad news. The Pope replies, "The bad news is that we lost the Wonder Bread account."

Anything you want

Ralph Klein was out for a walk, when he tripped, fell over the bridge railing, and landed in the creek below. Before his bodyguards could get to him, 3 kids who were fishing pulled him out of the water. He was so grateful he offered the kids whatever they wanted. The first kid said, "I want to go to Disneyland." Ralph said, "No problem. I'll take you there on Air Force One". The second kid said, "I want a new pair of Nike Air Jordan's." Ralph said, "I'll get them for you and even have Michael sign them!" The third kid said, "I want a motorized wheelchair with a built in TV and stereo headset!" Ralph was a little perplexed by this and said, "But you don't look like you are handicapped." The kid replied, "I will be, after my dad finds out I saved your ass from drowning!"

The Blond Man

A young ventriloquist is touring the clubs and stops to entertain at a bar in a small town. He's going through his usual run of stupid blond jokes, when a blond man in the fourth row stands on his chair and says: "I've heard just about enough of your denigrating blond jokes! What makes you think you can stereotype men that way? What does a person's physical attributes have to do with their worth as a human being?

It's guys like you who keep men like me from being respected at work and in my community, of reaching my full potential as a person ... because you and our kind continue to perpetuate discrimination against blondes ... all in the name of humor."

Flustered, the ventriloquist begins to apologize, but the blond stops him. "You stay out of this. Mister, I'm talking to that little jerk on your knee!"

A Sad Day

Two friends meet in the street. One looked forlorn and almost on the verge of tears. The other man said, "Hey, how come you look like the whole world caved in?" The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me forty thousand dollars." "That's not bad." "Hold on, I'm just getting started. Two weeks ago, a cousin I never knew kicked the bucket and left me eighty-five thousand free and clear." "I'd like that." "Last week my grandfather passed away. I inherited almost a quarter of a million." "The how come you look so glum?" "This week - nothing!"

Two Elderly Women Drivers

Two elderly women were out driving in a large car and both could barely see over the dashboard. As they were cruising along they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red but they just went on through. The woman in the passenger seat thought to herself "I must be losing it, I could have sworn we just went through a red light". After a few more minutes they came to another intersection and the light was red again and again they went right though. This time the woman in the passenger seat was almost sure that the light had been red but was really concerned that she was losing it.

She was getting nervous and decided to pay very close attention to the road and the next intersection to see what was going on. At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was definitely red and they went right through and she turned to the other woman and said, "Mildred! Did you know we just ran through three red lights in a row! You could have killed us!

Mildred turned to her and said, "Oh, am I driving?"

A Dishonest War

By Edward M. Kennedy

Of the many issues competing for attention in this new and defining year, one is of a unique order of magnitude: President Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq. The facts demonstrate how dishonest that decision was. As former Treasury secretary Paul H. O'Neill recently confirmed, the debate over military action began as soon as President Bush took office. Some felt Saddam Hussein could be contained without war. A month after the inauguration, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said: "We have kept him contained, kept him in his box." The next day, he said tellingly that Hussein "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction."

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, gave advocates of war the opening they needed. They tried immediately to tie Hussein to al Qaeda and the terrorist attacks. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld created an Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon to analyze the intelligence for war and bypass the traditional screening process. Vice President Cheney relied on intelligence from Iraqi exiles and put pressure on intelligence agencies to produce the desired result.

The war in Afghanistan began in October with overwhelming support in Congress and the country. But the focus on Iraq continued behind the scenes, and President Bush went along. In the Rose Garden on Nov. 26, he said: "Afghanistan is still just the beginning."

Three days later, Cheney publicly began to send signals about attacking Iraq. On Nov. 29 he said: "I don't think it takes a genius to figure out that this guy [Hussein] is clearly .a significant potential problem for the region, for the United States, for everybody with interests in the area." On Dec. 12 he raised the temperature: "If I were Saddam Hussein, I'd be thinking very carefully about the future, and I'd be looking very closely to see what happened to the Taliban in Afghanistan."

Next, Karl Rove, in a rare public stumble, made his own role clear, telling the Republican National

Committee on Jan. 19, 2002, that the war on terrorism could be used politically. Republicans could "go to the country on this issue," he said.

Ten days later, in his State of the Union address, President Bush invoked the "axis of evil" Iraq, Iran and North Korea, and we lost our clear focus on al Qaeda. The address contained 12 paragraphs on Afghanistan and 29 on the war on terrorism, but only one fleeting mention of al Qaeda. It said nothing about the Taliban or Osama bin Laden.

In the following months, although bin Laden was still at large, the drumbeat on Iraq gradually drowned out those who felt Hussein was no imminent threat. On Sept. 12 the president told the United Nations: "Iraq likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard and other chemical agents and has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon." He said Iraq could build a nuclear weapon "within a year" if Hussein obtained such material.

War on Iraq was clearly coming, but why make this statement in September? As White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. said, "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August." The 2002 election campaigns were then entering the home stretch. Election politics prevailed over foreign policy and national security. The administration insisted on a vote in Congress to authorize the war before Congress adjourned for the elections. Why? Because the debate would distract attention from the troubled economy and the failed effort to capture bin Laden. The shift in focus to Iraq could help Republicans and divide Democrats.

The tactic worked. Republicans voted almost unanimously for war and kept control of the House in the elections. Democrats were deeply divided and lost their majority in the Senate. The White House could use its control of Congress to get its way on key domestic priorities.

The final step in the march to war was a feint to the United Nations. But Cheney, Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz had convinced the president that war would be a cakewalk, with or without the United Nations, and that our forces would be welcomed as liberators. In March the war began.

Hussein's brutal regime was not an adequate justification for war, and the administration did not seriously try to make it one until long after the war began and all the false justifications began to fall apart. There was no imminent threat. Hussein had no nuclear weapons, no arsenals of chemical or biological weapons, no connection to Sept. 11 and no plausible link to al Qaeda. We never should have gone to war for ideological reasons driven by politics and based on manipulated intelligence.

Vast resources have been spent on the war that should have been spent on priorities at home. Our forces are stretched thin. Precious lives have been lost. The war has made America more hated in the world and made the war on terrorism harder to win. As Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said in announcing the latest higher alert: "Al Qaeda's continued desire to carry out attacks against our homeland is perhaps greater now than at any point since September 11th."

The most fundamental decision a president ever makes is the decision to go to war. President Bush violated the trust that must exist between government and the people. If Congress and the American people had known the truth, America would never have gone to war in Iraq. No president who does that to our country deserves to be reelected.

The writer is a Democratic senator from Massachusetts.

Freedom of Choice
www.edmforchoice.com

Gay or Christian?

St. Louis, Missouri - Do you have to choose? Many people struggle with that question each day. Yet, the answer to being gay or being Christian is simple: you can be both.

Bashert Ministries, Inc., a not- for- profit organization, has launched an educational effort promoting the possibility of being both Christian and gay. Their Web site www.GaybyGod.org conveys the simple message of God's affirming love for all people.

The site serves as an online resource guide for individual gay Christians to assist in locating open and affirming churches for safe worship, finding applicable books and visiting other welcoming and affirming Web sites. GaybyGod.org is also supportive for church leaders by offering information and a unique printed brochure for churches and ministries seeking materials for outreach purposes.

Another tool for furthering the message of God's love appears on t- shirts, sweatshirts, baseball caps and magnets. Churches have found great success in fundraising with these items while educating the general public at the same time. The word gay is used to encompass the entire Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (GLBTQ) community and has a bold, yet simple appeal by using it in the statement, Gay by God. This grassroots strategy hopes to reach far beyond the GLBTQ community and into mainstream churches worldwide.

For more information and a free brochure, please visit www.GaybyGod.org.

For further information please contact:
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Phone: (314) 517- 1141
www.GaybyGod.org
webmaster@gaybygod.org

Protovoulia Omofilofilon Politon

Homosexual Citizens Initiative

Violation of the Right to Education to Members of the LGBT Community in Greece

The Greek Association of Solidarity of Transvestites and Transsexuals (SATTE), in cooperation with POP (Homosexual Citizens Initiative) urgently asks you to condemn the racist and homophobic attitude described in the enclosed press release.

It is of extreme importance to join our efforts to put a stop to these acts, on behalf of the Greek State, against members of the LGBT Community. Education should be offered to all members of our society, despite their gender or sexual orientation.

To express your support or suggest further ways to react to these horrendous acts, please contact us at poppop@in.gr

Official Complaint

To The Minister of Education and Religion Mr. Euthimiou

In December 10th we received the following official complaint from three(3) transsexuals:

"In the midst of September 2002, we decided to attend a night high school in order to continue our education. Namely we went to the night high school of Peristeri, and we spoke with the principal and we stated to him that we wanted to enroll and he looked, more likely to say, confused and obviously shocked, and he refused to accept our registration pretending that the school had no vacancies. He then advised us to address to another night high school to enroll. We asked our familiar persons and friends where else we could find another night high school and they told us that we could go to a school to the Patisia area (downtown Athens) so we went there, and there we had the same answer: the school had no vacancies.

After all these disappointments and upon the foundation of Greek Association of Solidarity of Transvestites and Transsexuals (SATTE), we decided to report all these facts and request from our association to help us in order to find a night high school to continue our studies.

Thank you in advance

The undersigners

(signatures following)"

At the beginning, before we state our arguments, we have to make clear that we have the names of the three persons that made this official complaint, and we can give them to the Minister of Education and to the Public Prosecutor and we state clearly that we will take any measures provided by the law in order to solve this problem.

The Greek Constitution states clearly that the right in education and knowledge is a right of any Greek citizen. In the present case, we have a straightforward violation of constitutional rights . These particular principals of those night high schools considered the three transsexuals as citizens of third degree and refused to enroll them, violating their rights derived from the constitution and the Greek laws.

The attitude of these schoolmasters is not only unacceptable, but also despicable. The Ministry of Education and the Minister in person, must take all the necessary measures in order to prevent the appearance of so racist attitudes in the future. Such attitudes are not a living proof of a country that is going to hold the 2004 Olympic Games.

The law must be applicable to all Greek citizens and we demand the same for us. If some people don't want that, then we will bring them to the court of law. This is an obligation to our dignity!!!

What's more, Greece is a part of the European Union and such shameless incidents seriously degrade our country. So we will take all the possible measures and protest to the European parliament and to all the international organizations we can.

It is not acceptable that in the year 2004, the year of the Olympics in Greece, such things take place in our country. If the Greek state does not provide us with all the rights the other Greek citizens are entitled to, we will proceed and protest all over the world.

The President

Paola Revenioti

National Gay And Lesbian Task Force

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force announced that Rea Carey, long-time leader and activist in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, has been appointed Deputy Executive Director effective February 3.

"I cannot begin to express how thrilled we are that Rea Carey has agreed to join the Task Force she is a dynamic leader with an amazing record of achievement," said Matt Foreman, Task Force Executive Director. "She is the ideal person to lead what I know is our movement's most formidable and seasoned senior staff at this critical time."

"Given the political challenges facing our communities in dozens of states, local and state organizing has never been more important," said Rea Carey. "The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has long been the organization focused on grassroots organizing and building power, and I'm pleased that my skills and experience can serve this organization and our movement at this extraordinary time."

Ms. Carey will oversee Task Force program activities, including (a) the Policy Institute, the LGBT community's premiere think tank; (b) state and local organizing work, which has an unparalleled record of defeating anti-LGBT ballot initiatives; and, (c) implementation of the organization's new strategic vision, which includes re-establishing the Task Force's voice in Washington, DC. The Task Force senior staff includes some of the most respected activists in the nation, including Sean Cahill, Dave Fleischer, and Sue Hyde.

Ms. Carey has worked extensively in HIV/AIDS prevention and in the LGBT community. She was a co-founder of Gay Men and Lesbians Opposing Violence, an anti-violence organization in Washington DC, and the founding Executive Director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, the only national LGBT youth leadership organization. With a Master's from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, her expertise includes strategic planning, staff and board development, capacity building, coalition work, leadership training, and program development. (A complete bio appears at the end of this release.) For the last six months, Ms. Carey has been a consultant to the Task Force, providing strategic advice.Ms. Carey's appointment won immediate praise from a broad spectrum of LGBT leaders.

"The true measure of our victories in 2003 will be defined by how we as a community capitalize on the momentum of those victories in 2004. In that context, our organizations need to focus on identifying and recruiting the best staff resources. The Task Force has done just that with the addition of Rea Carey to its senior management team. We look forward to working hand in hand with Matt, Rea and the Task Force team during this critical year," said Joan Garry, Executive Director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

"Rea understands the critical importance of our state and local organizations and is deeply committed to building our community's grassroots strength," said Sean Kosofsky, Co-Chair of the Federation of Statewide LGBT Advocacy Organizations and Director of Policy at the Triangle Foundation in Michigan. "I am looking forward to working with her as the Task Force expands the services it offers to the grassroots."

"Rea's appointment is an extraordinary coup for the Task Force," said Lorri L. Jean, Executive Director of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center and former Task Force Executive Director. "From my own work at the Task Force and with Rea, I can't think of a better choice." "I respect Rea Carey enormously. She and Matt Foreman will be a dynamic leadership team for the Task Force, one of our community's most valuable and effective institutions," said Richard Burns, Co-Chair of the National Association of LGBT Community Centers and Executive Director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York.

Rea Carey Biography

Ms. Carey also has a long-standing relationship with the Task Force as colleague, consultant and supporter. She was one of the lead trainers in the Task Force's successful Youth Leadership Institutes in the late 1990's. From 2002 through 2003, she worked as a consultant to help the organization develop a strategic plan, which involved in-depth discussions with staff, board and stakeholders. Since September, 2003, she has served as the Task Force's Senior Strategist, charged with shaping its response to the nationwide marriage equality struggle. Ms. Carey serves on the board of directors for Sapientis, which advances the social and economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean by developing leaders who improve public education. She has also served on the advisory boards for such wide-ranging publications as Teen People magazine and the Georgetown University Journal of Gender and the Law. Rea earned her Master in Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Ms. Carey will be based in the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Washington, DC office.

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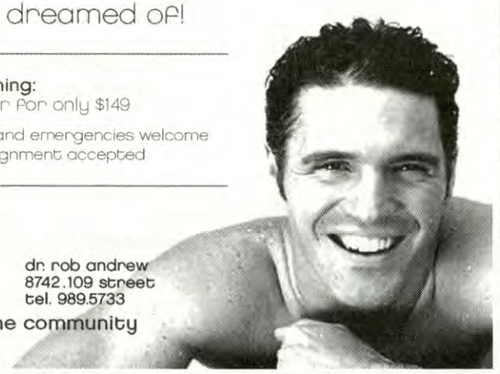

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Why I Am Endorsing Howard Dean

By Mike Schiller

Before Howard Dean announced his candidacy, I sent out an email to fellow Democratic activists explaining why I felt Howard Dean would be the best candidate to take on the Bush Administration. Rather than reiterate the points made in that letter, I will paraphrase them and then move on to an explanation

of why my support for him has only solidified over the past year.

The main thing which initially caught my attention was his defense of civil unions in the face of immeasurable adversity at a time when supporting gay rights was unpopular. I saw the Democrats in the Senate split on issues like that all throughout 2001 and 2002, with the Boxer-Corzine wing vigorously defending human and labor rights, and the Lieberman-Miller wing waffling on the most critical issues. I saw the so-called "moderates" of the party cast indefensible votes for political reasons, rather than reasons of conscience. Interestingly enough, many of these votes saw Jim Jeffords, a true moderate and former republican, siding with the Boxer-Corzine wing of the party. That fact made it clear that the DLC's Senate standard-bearers had moved too far to the right to call themselves moderate. I knew that the Democratic Party needed real leadership, and that void had to be filled by someone with the experience of staring down critics while pursuing some noble, just, cause that was initially unpopular with their own constituents- and succeeding in achieving the goal of justice in that situation (rather than easily conceding defeat and blaming the opposition for their failure, which is what so many in the Senate had been doing over the past year)

Howard Dean fit the exact description of what I felt the Democratic Party needed, and he has since proven himself to be an even better candidate than I could have imagined in my wildest dreams. He has done, on the campaign trail with our political system, what he did in Vermont with gay rights. Changed the rules, faced down his critics, and told the American people the truth about things nobody else was willing to talk about- even when doing so appeared to create controversy that could "backfire".

The media tried and tried to create the illusion that Dean's words and deeds were backfiring, just as they tried to do to the Dixie Chicks. According to Billboard Magazine, by the end of 2003 The Dixie Chicks "boycott" did so much damage that smash hit albums by Kelly Clarkson, Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez, Avril Lavigne, Kid Rock, Beyonce, Eminem, Elvis Presley, Coldplay, Missy Elliot, Toby Keith, and Tim McGraw- all sold fewer copies in 2003 than the Dixie Chicks album! (Source: Billboard's 2003: The Year In Music & Touring, Chart: Top 200 Albums Of 2003)

Likewise, though the media will continue to attempt to make him appear weakened by his honesty, Howard Dean has built a campaign on truth- and as they say the truth will set you free. Dean told the American people the truth about why we really need to know more about September 11th- that the question of responsibility does not merely amount to a question of who "screwed up" but a deeper, easily ridiculed but incredibly important question of whether it was a "screw-up" at all –is a question that deserves an answer, and an honest one. Cynthia McKinney tried to say the same thing and was voted out of office for it- yet Dean did not let that deter him from saying that it was a valid question. It is a valid question, and hopefully people are now beginning to realize just how urgent it is these questions are answered.

So when I weigh the gun control position against his other positions, he remains my favorite candidate for President.

He opposed the fraudulent war that senselessly ended so many young American lives, and he did so in a constructive manner by helping the public to understand why the war was wrong through dialogue- and he has succeeded in educating people about the situation enough to render the Bush administration and the media's incessant spin completely ineffective. The people now know about the lies they've been told and why they were lied to, and they are now able to see through the new lies Bush continues to tell. He agrees that we need to get our troops out of Iraq, but also understands that dictating a timeline to the United Nations at a time when we are trying to repair our relationships with the international community would be unrealistic.

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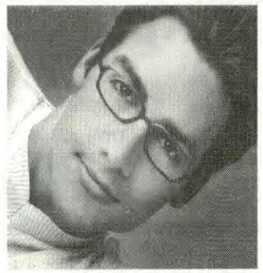

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We need to work with the United Nations toward a solution which removes our troops from Iraq as soon as possible, but we need to let the UN tell us how and when to withdraw if we want them to help us do it.

Dean has endorsed a repeal of Bush's tax cuts. He's pledged to ensure every American has health coverage, and promised to balance the budget- both feats he simultaneously accomplished as governor of Vermont. He wants to repeal the Patriot Act, and has a detailed, elaborate plan to reduce college tuition costs. He is also the only candidate who's told the truth about the way Bush's tax cuts have actually forced Governors nationwide to raise property taxes, which not only hurts property owners but also harms renters who end up helping the property owners foot the bill. Bush's unfunded mandates have caused such massive tax hikes that stores and offices have been forced to close all over the Nation, and that is one of the leading reasons why so many Americans have been losing their jobs for the past four years, and certainly one of the factors driving companies to outsource jobs overseas. When Bush's tax cuts have been repealed, state and municipal property taxes will go down, and the tax and rent burdens of those in the middle and lower income brackets will all go down as a result.

That is another strength of Howard Dean's. He understands the underlying causes of this recession and knows exactly what needs to be done to restore job growth. He is not going to try and fool people into believing that if they spend their life savings on a Christmas shopping binge the economy will magically recover and employ everyone. He is willing to tell people the truth about the fact that the issue is more complex than that. The world needs global human rights laws in order to have a functional and fair global economy. His solution recognizes that international trade can be economically empowering with the right balance of global regulation and a dose of common sense on the domestic policy end. He recognizes the fact that the most important measure of economic recovery is how many jobs are being created here at home, and that will be the cornerstone of his economic policy just as it has been the cornerstone of his campaign. At the same time, he will try to fix the global trade system to rectify the very complaints held by global trade's opponents. It's not beyond repair, but its repair requires a balanced approach that takes our domestic needs as seriously as the needs of the needs of the global community- without sacrificing one for the other. That's exactly what I've been hoping to see a candidate understand, and Howard Dean understands it better than any other politician whose views I've heard on the subject.

Dr. Dean also did something none of the other candidates would have dared to do- he focused his fundraising efforts on small donations, knowing that the more small donations he gets, the less dependent on large donations he is, and thus, the less beholden he is to large donors. He has been able to raise all his donations from people who are donating because they believe in him, not because they want special favors later on. Rather than taking money from people who are giving because they want him to change his agenda, he is taking money only from those who are giving because they genuinely support his agenda. That is what donations are supposed to be. Signals of support, not signals of greed or power. They're supposed to be a way for people to empower the people they really like – because they like them for who they are and what they set out to accomplish.

(Mike Schiller is the founder of the Dem-Elections-Strategy internet activist organization.)

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Gay Games in Chicago

The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau has estimated that a Gay Games in Chicago would generate a minimum of $25 million in direct economic benefit to the City and the region. In estimates provided to Chicago Games, Inc. the CTB numbers are based upon approximately 24,000 visitors to the Chicago region, 12,000 competitors and 12,000 friends, family and other tourists. The CTB Research is "conservative," and reflects a request from CGI for a number to help estimate the benefits if Chicago were selected to host the Gay Games.

"We view this number as a starting point," said Kevin Boyer, spokesperson for CGI. "Some Sydney experts have claimed an economic impact of close to $80 million US." Economic impact numbers are estimates calculated by governments and tourism boards as they try to evaluate the benefits back to a community from travel and tourism. The Chicago CTB noted that while the numbers are conservative, actual economic impact could only be measured after the event had occurred.

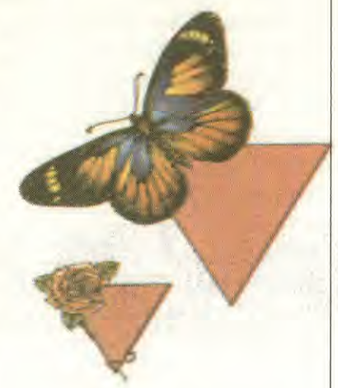
Advisory Council Vote

In related Chicago news, the City's Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues has joined more than 25 other community organization promising support for a 2006 Gay Games held in Chicago. The Council, meeting January 21, 2004, adopted a resolution without opposition that "recognizes the hard work, deep commitment, and level of expertise that Chicago Games Inc. brings to its planned bid to host Gay Games 2006," and resolves that the council "will provide and encourage all feasible and advisable support to Chicago Games Inc. in its hosting activities after a review of award terms if its bid is accepted by the Federation of Gay Games." The sponsor of the motion further clarified that a November vote stating "the Council could not recommend a bid," should not be interpreted as opposition to CGI, but as a resolution offered at a moment in time when the Council felt it couldn't support the bid.

Members of CGI made a lengthy presentation to the Advisory Council at its January 21 meeting. During that meeting, they presented draft budget numbers, noting an overall budget of $6.2 million with $1.3 million from corporate sponsors, $200K from tourism grants, $2.7 million from athlete registration fees and $2 million from ticket sales, visitor badges, fundraising, donors and license fees. "Our budget is still under development, but this Draft Budget #8 reflects a conservative approach that will ensure a financially stable event," said Boyer.

"We are grateful for the confidence shown by the Council in our work," said Mona Noriega, a member of the CGI Board of Directors. "If Chicago is selected to host the Gay Games in 2006, a partnership with the Advisory Council will help ensure even greater community involvement and responsiveness."

Chicago Games, Inc. is a nonprofit organization preparing a bid to host Gay Games VII in the summer of 2006. Bid documents are due February 1, 2004, with a decision by the Federation of Gay Games expected March 1, 2004. Chicago is competing against Los Angeles for the right to host the event.



About the Gay Games

The Gay Games is a quadrennial athletic and cultural event, which brings together people from around the world. Based on the principles of inclusion and participation, the Gay Games welcomes all people without regard to their sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, political belief(s), athletic/artistic ability, age, physical challenge, or health status. For more information about Chicago Games, Inc., visit www.chicagogamesinc.org

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If you are interested in talking with us or know a friend or family member that might be interested, please contact me. My name is Michael Ziff and I am the researcher for KINK

You can email me anytime at michael@papernyfilms.com. Please leave a contact number and return email address and I will be happy to contact you.

Kindest regards,
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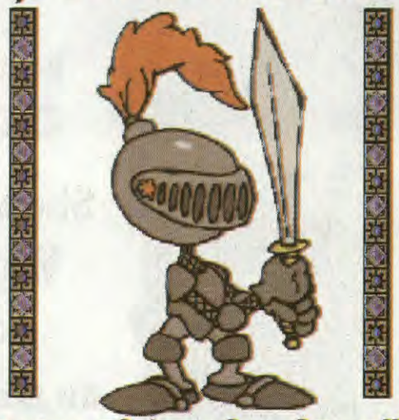

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Growing AIDS Crisis

Scheduled within eight days of films ranging from comedies to murder mysteries during Reel Pride Michigan, is the award-winning exploration into the world of HIV/AIDS in THE GIFT. THE GIFT, sponsored in part by the Midwest AIDS Prevention Project (MAPP), is an eye-opening documentary that sheds light on a controversial subculture that has recently gained national media exposure: "bug-chasers" and "gift-givers." These gay men intentionally seek out HIV infection or willingly infect others with the virus in an attempt to find a sense of community.

Said Jeffrey Montgomery, Executive Director of Triangle Foundation, "Some people will find this a challenging and controversial film, but everyone who is concerned about the state of the [AIDS] Epidemic and its' collateral issues, and how these issues are being confronted should see this offering."

"AIDS is not over," stated Craig Covey, CEO of MAPP, a statewide grassroots health organization that has been serving the community for over 16 years, "[AIDS] is an important health concern for the gay community."

With interviews with young men such as "Doug," who now regrets the "gift" he so desperately wanted, and "Kenboy," who holds a "conversion party" where dozens of men attempt to infect him so that he no longer needs to worry about it, Hogarth's film raises issues of personal choice and public morality, while balancing issues of public health and HIV-prevention. "THE GIFT is a real opportunity to further understand a terribly significant phenomenon of our time," said Triangle Foundation Executive Director Montgomery.

"Once again this year, MAPP is pleased to be collaborating with Reel Pride Michigan to bring films such as THE GIFT to Michigan, " stated. To request a festival guide, visit Reel Pride Michiga at www.reelpridemichigan.com

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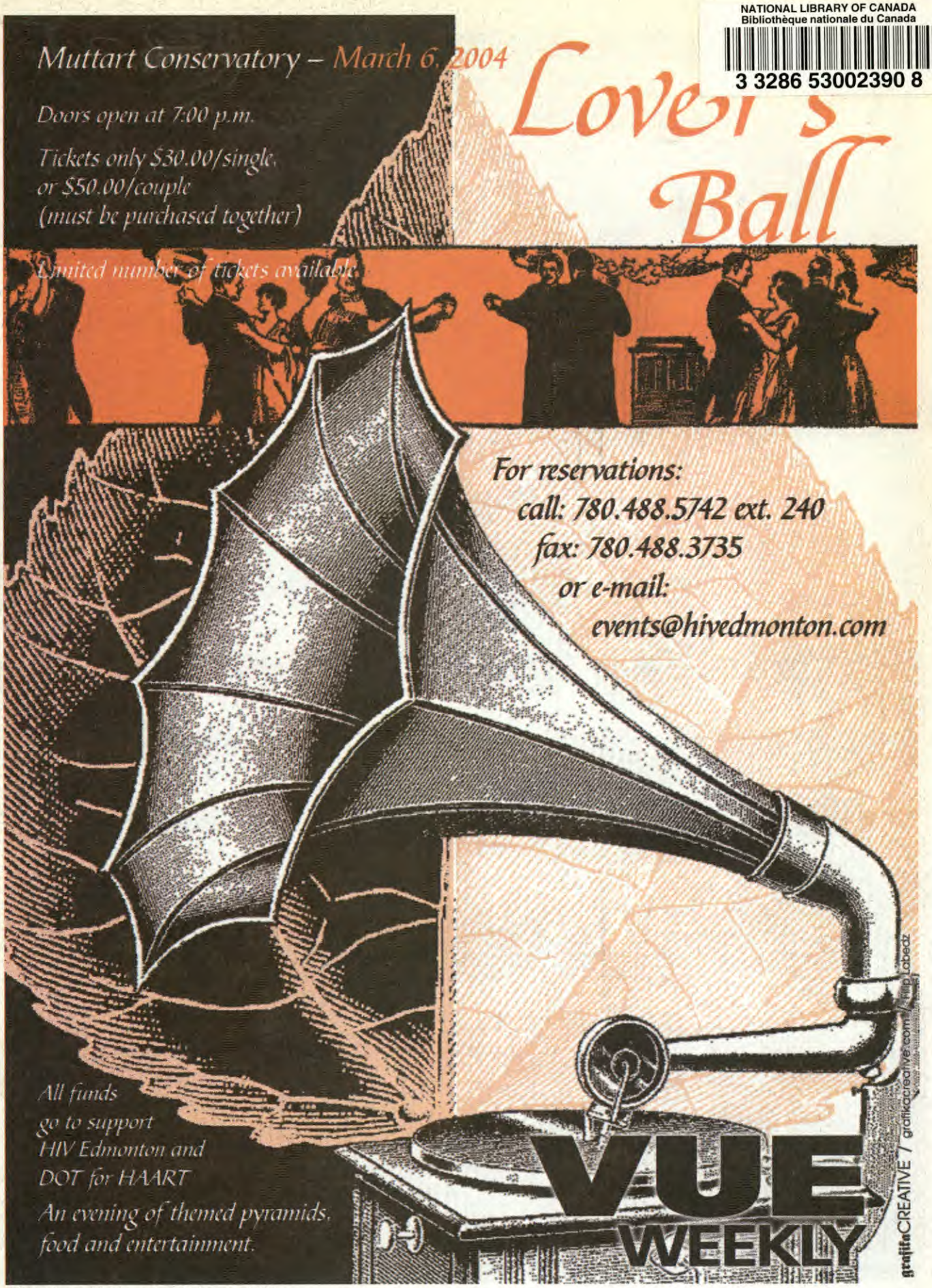

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